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AUTHOR Thompson, Debra S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a detailed unit plan format for use by teacher trainers in early childhood education classes to teach students how to write integrated thematic unit plans for developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children. The paper first provides the outline for the thematic unit plan, and then explains each of the plan's 16 elements: (1) theme; (2) grade and class size; (3) explanation of developmental appropriateness; (4) general goals; (5) skill and concept development; (6) brief summary of the unit; (7) integration with other curriculum areas; (8) introductory activity; (9) culminating activity; (10) methods of evaluation; (11) topic webs; (12) curriculum areas plan chart; (13) lesson plans; (14) bibliography of children's books; (15) bibliography of teacher resources; and (16) picture file. Four appendixes provide a list of possible learning centers in a classroom for 3- to 5-year-olds, a list of learning experiences that can be incorporated into thematic units, a curriculum areas plan chart, and an outline for a lesson plan. (MDM)

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Creating Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum for Young Children: An Integrated Thematic Unit Plan Format

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Debra S. Thompson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor and Program Chair
University of Dubuque
2000 University Ave., 203 Smith Hall
Dubuque, IA 52001

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Introduction.

A detailed thematic unit plan format is provided below which can be utilized by teacher trainers in early childhood education classes for use in teaching students how to write integrated thematic unit plans for developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children.

First, the outline for the thematic unit plan is given and then the actual thematic unit plan format is explained. A full description of each section of the thematic unit plan format is furnished within the format.

It can be noted that integration with at least three curriculum areas is required in each lesson plan. Students would be trained to choose a primary lesson topic for each lesson plan and then incorporate at least two other activities into the lesson in different curriculum areas. Students would also be strongly encouraged to implement a variety of learning centers and other learning experiences into individual lesson plans and the entire unit. Suggestions for such learning centers and learning experiences are provided in Appendices A and B at the end.

It is conceivable that this thematic unit plan format could be used for a wide variety of types of units for teaching young children, including multicultural and global education units.

Outline for Thematic Unit Plan.

A. Theme.

B. Children.

C. Developmental Appropriateness.

D. General Goals.

E. Skill/Concept Development.

F. Brief Summary of the Unit.

G. Integration with Other Curriculum Areas.

H. Introductory Activity.

I. Culminating Activity.

J. Proposed Method(s) of Evaluation.

K. Web.

L. Curriculum Areas Plan Chart.

M. Lesson Plans.

N. Bibliography of Children's Books.

O. Bibliography of Teacher Resources.

P. Picture File.

Format for Thematic Unit Plan.

A. Theme: Statement of the topic and discussion of the rationale for teaching it.

Why does it seem to be important/appropriate/relevant/ meaningful to teach this particular topic and its content to young children? In other words, what is it about this topic that makes it worthwhile and relevant to young children?

Focus on the individual or separate areas of content within the unit and why these are important to teach. (Expected

approximate length: 1/2 to 3/4 page)

B. Children: State the age/grade range that the thematic unit is geared for.

State the group size that will be involved in the unit (whole class, small groups, individuals [or some combination of these]).

C. Developmental Appropriateness: Explain how this thematic unit and its content is developmentally appropriate for the age/grade range you have identified in B. (Expected approximate length: 1/3 to 1/2 page)

D. General Goals: List 5 to 8 broad desired outcomes for the unit -- what you want the children to understand, experience, feel, value, explore, discover, become aware of, learn about, or understandings, concepts, and/or skills to be developed as a result of this unit.

These goals should cover the content of the <u>entire</u> unit (all lessons to be taught).

Think about what you want the children to know (concepts, facts, information, knowledge) or do (skills) by the end of the unit.

The format for writing these goals is the same as for the objectives of the individual lessons ("The learner/student/child will...".)

Goals are stated in <u>precise</u> terms and in complete sentence

format.

E. Skill/Concept Development: List 6 to 10 primary or major skills and concepts to be gained by the children as a result of the experience of this unit.

List the concepts and then the skills separately under headings for each.

F. Brief Summary of the Unit: Briefly summarize the content of the unit, including the topics to be covered, and the order or sequence that they will be taught in.

Also, include the projected length of time the unit will be taught in - how frequently the individual lessons will be taught (daily, weekly, biweekly, etc.), how long learning centers, etc. will be set up in the room, and the length of the entire unit.

Mention how the unit would fit into the yearly curriculum for the age/grade level you have stated in B. (Expected approximate length: 1/2 to 1 page)

G. Integration with Other Curriculum Areas: State the primary curriculum area that your unit topic falls into (science, social studies, math, etc.) and then briefly explain or summarize how you will integrate its content into other curriculum areas, learning centers, and learning experiences (field trips, guest speakers, etc.).

Also, were there any curriculum areas which you particularly found were most suited to integration with your unit topic?

(Expected approximate length: 1/3 to 1/2 page)

A list of the variety of possible types of (1) learning centers and (2) other learning experiences which can be incorporated into units are provided in Appendices A and B, respectively, at the end of this unit.

H. Introductory Activity: State and describe which lesson will be used to introduce the unit to the children and initially capture their interest. (Expected approximate length: a few sentences)

I. Culminating Activity: State and describe which lesson will be used to culminate the unit for the children. In other words, explain how you will wrap up the unit and help the children to review or reinforce or reflect on what has been learned and experienced. (Expected approximate length: a few sentences)

J. Proposed Method(s) of Evaluation: State how you plan to evaluate whether or not your goals for the unit have been achieved.

In other words, how will you know whether the children have grasped the skills and concepts you intended them to learn? Briefly summarize your method(s) of evaluation. (Expected approximate length: 1/3 to 1/2 page)

K. Web: Brainstorm and create a complete web using the main topic as the center of the web. In some cases, there may be two or three main topics and then several webs will need to be created.

The web you create should be a zoom web with two to three levels of detail.

Draw this on a separate sheet of paper and label it.

L. Curriculum Areas Plan Chart: Create and fill in the Curriculum Areas Plan Chart as provided in Appendix C at the end of this unit.

Along the top row of the chart, fill in each lesson plan's name and number (lesson #1, #2, etc.) as listed in M. below and then show how you are integrating that lesson in the various curriculum areas, with different learning centers, and with other learning experiences.

List the various learning centers and other learning experiences you are planning to implement in the unit on the curriculum areas plan chart at the bottom of it and then show which lessons they are being related to within the unit.

M. Lesson Plans: Develop 8 individual lessons (about two to three weeks of lessons if taught 3 to 4 times per week) according to the lesson plan outline format which is provided in Appendix D at the end of this unit.

The lessons should be given in the sequence they are to be taught in. They should follow a logical sequence of progression and development of skills and concepts (in other words, beginning skills, vocabulary words, etc, should be introduced so that other more difficult skills, concepts, etc. can be built from there in the unit). (Expected approximate length: about 1/2 to 3/4 page per

lesson plan)

Remember that you need to integrate the content of each lesson with other curriculum areas. Each lesson should contain integration with at least two other curriculum areas.

N. Additional Activities: List 8 additional activities which you could include in the unit if you had additional time to teach it.

These should not be activities which are already being taught in the eight lesson plans above: they are additional activities, lessons, learning centers, or other learning experiences which, if you had additional time for the unit, you could include in it.

Describe each activity in a short paragraph of 4 to 6 sentences and mention where the activity would sequentially fall within the unit (beginning, middle, or end, or after lesson #3, #6, etc.).

O. Bibliography of Children's Books: List using a complete reference format at least 10 high quality children's storybooks which are directly related to the content of your unit topic.

If you have previously listed these in your lesson plans, re-list them here.

P. Bibliography of Teacher Resources: List using a complete reference format at least 10 high quality teacher resource materials which are directly related to the content of your unit topic.

If you have previously listed these in your lesson plans, re-list them here.

If you only used a particular activity or chapter from a specific page in a resource book, provide the page number(s).

Teacher resources vary in type.

Q. Picture File: Develop a picture file of a minimum of 15 to 20 pictures directly related to your unit topic which can be used in individual lessons.

Pictures need to be large enough to use during circle time and must be mounted individually on construction paper or matboard. In other words, pictures should be ready for display. No posters or commercial materials may be used except as supplementary materials (not as the original requirement of 15 to 20 but in addition to this requirement [you may hand in such supplementary materials but label these as such]).

REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING WHEN PLANNING YOUR UNIT:

(1) The content of what is taught should be developmentally appropriate, child-centered, and investigatory.

(2) Investigatory means that the learning experiences should be hands-on experiences, discovery, exploration oriented. Take a "let's find out about this" approach.

(3) Content of lessons should be clearly and directly integrated with other curriculum areas, learning centers, and

learning experiences (as described above).

(4) If at all possible (depending on the unit topic), content should incorporate multicultural, global, and nonsexist education content as well.

Appendix A.

Possible Learning Centers in a Classroom for Three to Five Year Olds

1. Reading/Language Center
2. Creative Writing Center
3. Listening Center (including Music)
4. Viewing Center (for video materials)
5. Sociodramatic Play Area
6. Math Center
7. Painting Area (and Drying Area)
8. Clay Area
9. Craft Area
10. Sand/Water Table Area
11. Garden Area
12. Games and Puzzles Area (Manipulatives)
13. Water Play Area
14. Biological Science Area
15. Physical Science Area
16. Woodworking Area
17. Block Area
18. Sewing Area
19. Weaving Area
20. Current Events Area
21. Learning Centers (related to specific units or projects being undertaken in the classroom at a given time)
22. Indoor Large Motor Area

23. Outdoor Large Motor Area

24. Computer Area

25. Circle or Whole Group Area

26. Creative Dramatics or Dramatic Play Area (including puppets, theatre, etc.)

27. Library/Book Corner

28. Cooking/Eating Area (for meals, snacks, cooking projects, etc.)

29. Quiet Area (for children to be alone)

Appendix B.

Other Learning Experiences Which Can Be Incorporated Into Thematic Units

1. Outdoor Games
2. Health and Safety Activities
3. Circle Time Activities
4. Interactive Bulletin Boards
5. Field Trips
6. Guest Speakers
7. Films. Filmstrips, Video Tapes
8. Pictures, Posters, Picture Files
9. Audio Tapes, Records
10. Newspaper or Magazine Articles
11. Exhibits
12. Art or Arts/Crafts Activities
13. Science Experiments
14. Storybooks, Poems

Appendix C.

CURRICULUM AREAS PLAN CHART UNIT TOPIC:_____

LESSON:	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
Curriculum Area -								
Social Studies								
Science								
Math								
Nutrition								
Health/Safety								
Others								
Multicultural Ed.								
Global Ed.								
Nonsexist Ed.								

Language

Literacy

Children's
Literature

Creative Arts -

Art or
Arts/Crafts
Activities

Music

Movement

Physical Development -

Fine Motor
Skills

Large Motor
Skills

Learning Centers -

Other Learning

Experiences -

Appendix D.

Outline for Lesson Plan.

I. Identifying Information.

II. Objectives.

III. Skill/Concept Development.

IV. Materials Needed.

V. Initiating Stage/Anticipatory Set/Motivation.

VI. Procedure for Teaching the Lesson.

VII. Review/Reinforcement/Closure.

VIII. Method(s) of Evaluation.

IX. Related Activities.

X. Variation Activities.

XI. Extension Activities.